

The angels' appearance and message motivated the shepherds to take action.

4. By responding to the message, the shepherds experienced the most significant event of their lives.

**READ** Luke 2:17-20 **Mark everything that stands out to you.**

<sup>17</sup> After seeing Him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this Child. <sup>18</sup> All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, <sup>19</sup> but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.

When a person really experiences God in their life and He begins to make a difference, they cannot help but speak about they have seen and heard.

**REFLECT** Write your thoughts from what you marked in Luke 2:17-20. I.E. - Because he shepherds followed through on what was revealed to them by God - thru the angel - not only did they experience something designed by God that was very special - but others were blessed as well. My willingness to walk by faith and follow God's leading will have a life-changing impact not only in my life - but in the lives of those I interact with in life! [Now write your observations & thoughts. Try to keep in personal.]

Conclusion

The challenge for us is to experience the dramatic birth of Jesus in our lives, then go back to the routine of our job, school, & family & continue day-by-day to glorify God.

The key for us when we hear the old, old story again is to remember that it's true. The God of the universe was born in Bethlehem, lived a perfect life, died for our sins, and rose from the dead. And, when we invite Him into our life, He forgives our sins and gives us eternal life.

**RESPOND** (Application for this week) **WHAT** was the most significant scripture for you this week? \_\_\_\_\_

**WHY** are those scriptures significant to you at this time in your life? \_\_\_\_\_

**HOW** can you practically apply what God spoke to you about this week? \_\_\_\_\_

**WHAT** will be the time frame for your application?

(1) Start Date \_\_\_\_\_ (2) **Progress** Check Date(s) \_\_\_\_\_ (3) Finish Date \_\_\_\_\_

**WHO** I can ask to hold me accountable for my application: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE MIRACULOUS BIRTH**

Series: **The Gospel of Luke**

\*Note – There is an OVERVIEW of Luke available on the kiosk where you pick up this Devotional. You may find it helpful in your study and processing of the sermon and this Sermon-Based Devotional.

<sup>a</sup> **Luke 2:1** – Luke is the only Gospel writer who related the events he recorded to world history. His account was addressed to a predominantly Greek audience that would have been interested in and familiar with the political situation. Palestine was under the rule of the Roman Empire with Emperor Caesar Augustus, the first Roman emperor, in charge. The Roman rulers, considered to be like gods, stood in contrast to the tiny baby in a manger who was truly God in the flesh.

A Roman census (registration) was taken to aid military conscription or tax collection. The Jews could not avoid paying taxes. Augustus's decree went out in God's perfect timing and according to God's perfect plan to bring His Son into the world.

<sup>a</sup> Adapted from the Life Application Bible, New Living Translation, Large Print Edition, Tyndale, p. 2,178

Our goal for the Jesus birth story should be that familiarity deepens our appreciation.

The birth of Jesus brings change into the lives of those who get to know Him.

1. Joseph moved from tension to peace.

**READ** Luke 2:1-5 **Mark everything that stands out to you.**

<sup>1</sup> At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. <sup>2</sup> (This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.) <sup>3</sup> All returned to their own ancestral towns to register for this census. <sup>4</sup> And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. <sup>5</sup> He took with him Mary, to whom he was engaged, who was now expecting a child.

**Luke 2:1-6** – The Romans ruled the civilized world at this time. By contrast, Joseph controlled very little. Against his better judgement and political convictions, he complied with the Roman order to make a long trip just to pay his taxes. His fiancée, who had to go with him, was about to give birth.

The Romans were in control insofar as human authority can get its way by exerting human power. But the Romans did not recognize their limitations. In reality, God controls the world. In all times and places, He works His will. By the decree of Emperor Augustus, Jesus was born in the very town prophesied for His birth (Micah 5:2), even though His parents did not live there. Joseph and Mary were both descendants of David. The Old Testament is filled with prophecies that the Messiah would be born in David's royal line (see, for example, Isaiah 11:1; Jeremiah 33:15; Ezekiel 37:24; Hosea 3:5). Rome made the decree, just as God intended.

**Luke 2:4, 5** – It is easy to think, "I'm being obedient to God, so why aren't things going better?" We face discomfort and inconvenience and immediately think either that we have misread God's will or that God has made a mistake. But watch this quiet couple as they head toward Bethlehem. God did not soften Joseph's and Mary's bumpy road; rather, He strengthened them! God did not provide a luxurious inn for Joseph and Mary, but brought His Son into the world in humble surroundings. When we do God's will, we are not guaranteed comfort and convenience. But we are promised that everything, even discomfort and inconvenience, has meaning in God's plan. He will guide you and provide all you need. Like Joseph, live each day by faith, trusting that God is in charge. [See Ps. 31:3; 32:8]

Adapted from the Life Application Bible, New Living Translation, Large Print Edition, Tyndale, pp. 2,178-2,179

What a **tense, frustrating** experience this must have been for Joseph, who was supposed to be in charge.

To Joseph, it looked like everything was **coming unraveled**, but to God, everything was unfolding just the way He had **planned**.

2. Mary moved from **pain** to **contentment**.

**READ Luke 2:6-7** Mark what stands out to you.

*6 And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. 7 She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped Him snugly in strips of cloth and laid Him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.*

**Luke 2:7** – Strips of cloth were used to keep a baby warm and give him a sense of security. These cloths were believed to protect his internal organs as well. The custom of wrapping infants this way is still practiced in many Mid-eastern countries.

This mention of the manger is the basis for the traditional belief that Jesus was born in a stable. Stables were often caves with feeding troughs (mangers) carved into the rock walls. Despite popular Christmas card pictures, the surroundings were dark and dirty. This was not the atmosphere the Jews expected as the birthplace of the Messiah-King. They thought their promised Messiah would be born in royal surroundings. We should not limit God by our expectations – or how we might measure a person’s credibility or usefulness to God. He is at work wherever He is needed in our sin-darkened and dirty world. *“Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world’s eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you. Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And He chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God.”* [1 Corinthians 1:26-29, NLT]

Adapted from the Life Application Bible, New Living Translation, Large Print Edition, Tyndale, p. 2,180

The first time the word **pain** is used in the Bible, it is used in reference to **childbearing**. Genesis 3:16a *Then he said to the woman, “I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy, and in pain you will give birth.”*

In verse 7, Mary’s **pain** gave way to **contentment**.

**REFLECT** Write your thoughts from what you marked in **Luke 2:1-7**. *i.e.* – I noticed there is no record of Joseph or Mary ever complaining about their harsh situation. And there is no sense of “entitlement” on their part – even though they were being obedient to God AND even though they knew how God Himself was so intimately and uniquely involved in their lives! [Now write your observations and thoughts.]

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3. The shepherds moved from **fear** to **faith**.

**Luke 2:8** – God continued to reveal the news about His Son, but not to those we might expect. Luke records that Jesus’ birth was announced to shepherds in the fields. They may have been the shepherds who supplied the lambs for the Temple sacrifices that were performed for the forgiveness of sins. Here, the angels invited these shepherds to greet the Lamb of God (John 1:36), who would take away the sins of the world forever.

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**READ Luke 2:8-16** Mark everything that stands out to you.

*8 That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. 9 Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord’s glory surrounded them. They were terrified, 10 but the angel reassured them. “Don’t be afraid!” he said. “I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. 11 The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! 12 And you will recognize Him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger.”*

*13 Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, 14 “Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.”*

*15 When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, “Let’s go to Bethlehem! Let’s see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” 16 They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger.*

**Luke 2:8-15** – What a birth announcement! The shepherds were terrified, but their fear turned to joy as the angels announced the Messiah’s birth. First the shepherds ran to see the baby; then they spread the word. Jesus is your Messiah, your Savior. Do you look forward to meeting with the Lord each day? Are you so grateful for all He has done for you and all that He means to you that you can’t help but tell others of how they can come to know Him as well? The author of Psalm 96 is not known for sure, but it resembles much of what King David wrote and his style. God said of David that he was a man after God’s own heart. Psalm 96:1, 2 says, *“Sing a new song to the Lord! Let the whole earth sing to the Lord! Sing to the Lord; bless His name. Each day proclaim the good news that He saves.”*

**Luke 2:11-14** – Some of the Jews were waiting for a savior to deliver them from Roman rule; others hoped the Christ (Messiah) would deliver them from physical ailments. But Jesus, while healing their illnesses and establishing a spiritual kingdom, delivered them from sin. His work is more far-reaching than anyone could imagine. Christ paid the price for sin and opened the way to peace with God. He offers us more than temporary political or physical changes—He offers us new hearts that will last for eternity.

Adapted from the Life Application Bible, New Living Translation, Large Print Edition, Tyndale, p. 2,180

The angels brought a message of **hope**. The **Savior** of the world had been born in Bethlehem.

**REFLECT** Write your thoughts from **Luke 2:8-16**. *i.e.* – The detail in this passage is amazing! At some point in time, someone had to have had a conversation with the shepherds to know all these details and for Luke to have this information to record around A.D. 60. To me, this means that what I tell to others – of what I know about Jesus, can have great impact in the lives of others down-the-road in future generations! – And I need to be intentional about that!

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